

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 PA-02 PRS-01

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FM AMCONSUL ANTWERP

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1026

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

UNCLAS ANTWERP 0082

E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: ECEM, PORS, US, BE

SUBJ: EXPLOSION AT UNION CARBIDE PLANT IN ANTWERP

REF: ANTWERP 0076

ANTWERP PRESS THIS MORNING (FEBRUARY 12) GAVE PROMINENT PLAY TO ANONYMOUS TELEPHONE CALL MADE EVENING OF FEBRUARY 10 TO GUARD AT UNION CARBIDE'S UNDAMAGED PLANT ON LEFT BANK OF SCHELDT IN WHICH CALLER, SPEAKING IN ENGLISH, SAID EXPLOSION WAS RESULT OF BOMB PLACED BY AN UNNAMED JAPANESE ORGANIZATION AND THAT SIMILAR EXPLOSIONS AT OTHER PLANTS WOULD FOLLOW. PRESS REPORTED POLICE HAD PASSED ON WARNING TO OTHER PLANTS IN ANTWERP AREA.

I SPOKE THIS MORNING WITH ANTWERP POLICE COMMISSIONER WHO CONFIRMED FOREGOING. HE STATED EXPLOSION RESULTED FROM TECHNICAL REASONS AND NOT A BOMB, AND IN HIS OPINION THREAT WAS A CRUEL HOAX.

I ALSO SPOKE THIS MORNING WITH HEADS OF SEVERAL LEADING AMERICAN FIRMS INCLUDING GENERAL MOTORS AND USI WHO CONFIRMED RECEIPT OF MESSAGE EVENING OF FEBRUARY 10 BY TELEX FROM POLICE. MESSAGE REPORTED THREAT AS DESCRIBED IN PRESS, FROM CALLER WHO SPOKE BROKEN ENGLISH. MESSAGE ALSO SUGGESTED INCREASED SECURITY MEASURES EVEN THOUGH POLICE CONSIDERED THREAT TO PROBABLY BE A HOAX. FIRMS TOLD ME THEY HAVE TIGHTENED SECURITY MEASURES, INCLUDING USE OF UNCLASSIFIED

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AN ADDITIONAL GUARD AT GENERAL MOTORS.

CASUALTY TOLL FROM DISASTER IS NOW SIX DEAD AND 12 SERIOUSLY INJURED.

AT VARIOUS ANTWERP PLANT ENTRANCES IN PORT AREA YESTERDAY LEFTIST-ANARCHIST ORGANIZATION AMADA (ALL POWER TO THE WORKERS) WAS HANDING OUT LEAFLETS GIVING NAMES OF DEAD WHOM IT DESCRIBED AS "VICTIMS OF CAPITALISM" AND REMINDING READERS OF PREVIOUS EXPLOSIONS IN CHEMICAL PLANTS IN PORT AREA.

COMMENT: ACCORDING TO ALL PROFESSIONAL OPINION I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN THE EXPLOSION WAS CAUSED BY INTERNAL TECHNICAL REASONS IN THE REACTOR AREA AND COULD NOT REPEAT NOT HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY A BOMB. MANAGING DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBORING USI PLANT, WHICH IS LENDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN PROCESSING POLYETHYLENE WHICH WAS NOT DESTROYED IN EXPLOSION, STATES THAT VAST AMOUNT OF DESTRUCTION (APPROXIMATELY 90 PERCENT OF ALL FACILITIES) RESULTING FROM EXPLOSION WAS DUE LARGELY TO THE FACT THAT UNION CARBIDE'S FIVE REACTORS WERE HOUSED IN ONE WALLED-IN AREA AND THAT EXPLOSION IN ONE REACTOR LEADS TO CHAIN REACTION KNOCKING THEM ALL OUT, WHEREAS USI REACTORS ARE SEPARATELY HOUSED AND AN EXPLOSION IN ONE WOULD CAUSE RELATIVELY LESS DAMAGE.
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